

Education

Regarding education, they did have speakers that came down to speak to the women, and to encourage, they were always encouraging women to take up a platform, to encourage them and given them more confidence.

When a person comes into the Guild, I think they are rather surprised at the things that we know as Guilds-women. What we have learnt over all the years. That we things. The great educational system was this business that the Guild would decide on a theme of lectures or things. The great educational system was this business that the Guild would decide on a theme of lectures for the year. Instead of having University Lecturers or WEA¹ people, the women did it themselves. And they would go to a little training class and be given very comprehensive notes.

They would have to give a series, probably six. And the Central Committee would probably choose the subject for the year. And then it would be the women on the District Committee who would have the task of going and giving six talks, once a week, or perhaps once a fortnight — on the subject chosen. It could be Peace. It could be Health. It could be Women's Rights. It could be anything under the sun. But in order to deliver the talk, they had to read the notes and they had to — if necessary — do a bit of thinking about it. Had to answer questions at the end of the time. If the questions couldn't get answered they then had to go back and answer them the following time — after they'd found out the answer.

I suppose Lillian Harris structured this (the Central Committee) but it was a marvellous structure. Women's groups now think that structure is ludicrous and of course, in some ways it is, but you had your Guild and you had your Guild Committee and you could stand to the District Committee, which would have about perhaps between ten and twenty Guilds, if you'd done so many years, perhaps three years on a branch committee, then you could stand for the Sectional Committee when you'd done your stint on the District Committee and then when you'd done your stint on the Sectional Committee, you could stand for the Central Committee. So that you never got to the Central Committee without being a very experienced lady! And though this does sound awful in a way — so hierarchical and, in a way, boring, it did mean that the women who got to the centre had a lot of experience in organisation and speaking. Now all these bodies in the District and the Section used to have Speakers' Conferences, Classes and Area Conferences, so that all the time they were training women to speak. And of course, the Central Committee would choose the subjects, as they still do.

In those days we were much more serious about having serious lecturers on serious subjects. The Education Committee would arrange to have lecturers come who would speak for instance on the National Health Service. The Guilds would ask for a course of lectures, say six lectures and the London Society particularly used to do it.

One of the subjects, I shouldn't laugh because it's quite important, was a pure water supply. It was an important subject for the rural areas.

And then there was another one called "The Flowers of the Guild Garden". You see each Area had a flower. But there were so many other things that we seemed to avoid talking about. Unemployment and the cause of it. You see in those days, my husband was out of work and in work and out of work and those are the kinds of things I felt mattered. And the kind of people who were going round giving lectures you see, didn't have their two feet on the ground. This was the difficulty. And those two stick in my mind — one because I didn't think it mattered, that was the flowers, and the other one because I thought it did matter.



Every Guild has a flower. This is the Marguerite of the South Eastern Section. We used to have a speaker on the subject of the "Flowers of the Guild Garden", and it was a glorious subject.

I was sent by the Guild to the NCLC — The National Council for London Colleges — the Guild sent me to their lectures and I remember we used to meet in Denmark Road, in Kilburn, South Kilburn, and it was a tiny little, dirty little room — I don't suppose it was as big as my kitchen, and the rats used to run along the floor, but we still had the lecture, we had gas light with the gas mantel up the top there, you know teaching us what Socialism and the Co-operative movement really meant. And that was well before the war. It was about 1932.


One of the lectures I used to be quite interested in was the "Futility of War", who wins in a war and who loses. Who gains and all the rest of it. And that used to impress me such a lot.

When the Guild first began, ordinary women couldn't read or write and how these people — Llewellyn and all those got through to the women I just don't know. Because it wasn't looked upon by their husbands as what they wanted them to do. 'Cos they usually left three or four children and that to go to the meeting and it was one penny a week you see.

They had a thing called "All Councils", which I used to enjoy very much. That was in early spring, I think and that was limited to people who were on the Sectional Councils, as I say, fairly experienced women mostly. Then, at that, speakers would introduce and discuss the subjects of the year and then those women would go and pass it on to the District women and so on. It was very good, I know that people laugh at it now, but women are so much better educated now, a lot of those women had left school at 13, 14 at the latest. There was no radio worth a mention, no telly, so that they were very much in need of information and guidance and that's where they got it.

We were also concerned with people's homes. It was the custom — right up to the 1950's — I think it was Mabel Ridealgh days, that it disappeared, that District Committee members had to go out speaking to the Branches and they had the official list of subjects that they had provided and they could choose from that list of subjects and one or two were very very popular. One was called "From River to Tap", which became a printed programme in the end which was really dealing with pure water supply — which seemed mad in London obviously, but which was a very real thing in the Midlands, the North and the rural areas. Then there was another one called "The House I Want. . ." which was dealing with housing standards and what size houses should be and what fitting and fixtures should be expected — and these were mainly written by the General Secretary of the day or she got someone to write them for her.

Mr. Blossom has made his garden a picture



He is now making a picture of his garden!

Mr. Blossom uses

C.W.S. SEEDS

And MR. BLOSSOM is only one of thousands of satisfied users. Every year glowing testimonials are received describing how gardeners have achieved success with C.W.S. Seeds. And every year the number grows larger!

A satisfied user writes:

I am forwarding you two of my Sweet Peas I have grown from the 2s. 6d. Collection I had from the C.W.S. Warehouse. There are 5 on each of them. I have an abundance of fours, and I thought you would like to see them.

C.W.S. SEEDS ARE OBTAINABLE FROM ALL CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

Then I went on to do education work — representing the Guild. I used to go and lecture to all the guilds. You had subjects given to you by the Section Council. They used to give you subject to speak on the Guild. If you'd been on a conference, you'd report on the conference. If you'd been on an International one, you'd report that. It gave you an opportunity of spreading to the Guilds but whatever I've done, in the way of lecturing or work that I've done, it's all through the Guild. I mean when I first went to the Guild I wouldn't get up and say a word. I had it in me to say it but I thought "I couldn't possibly do that". All I can say is that whatever I've done, I've done through the Guild and people I've met in the Guild.



Helping others

There was such a lot of poverty about in those days. Kids with no shoes and things like that, but you see, when you see that sort of thing it does something for you and I think you feel as if you want to help. And that's what the Guild did.

You see we had enlightened women in these Guilds who were encouraging other women to take part in Council work, or mostly of course, much earlier, it was more charitable work — they were great ones for flag days, for different charities you see.

In those days, every Christmas, we used to invite about fifty OAPs that were in a home and we'd all make different things for these pensioners. Every week we'd buy something — say sugar one week, tea another, then jellies another and we'd have a sing-song — we had a wonderful pianist and these old dears used to think it was wonderful. And that was one of the good things we did do.

We ran a wonderful concert party and in those days they used to have a get-together for new members and our party, The Munster Co-ops always used to be available for that, and I think the Co-op used to give us 7s 6d for that performance.

It is a very humane organisation. You think of others and all through my life in my Guild we've thought of others all the time. For instance we had a speaker from Dr. Barnardo's home — he told us about all their lads that were left and what a wonderful man Barnardo was so the Guild took up the challenge and started to go to see the home in London. Then we got there we decided that we'd adopt one of the little boys there.

We adopted this small boy and we used to go and see him — take a coach up and see him periodically. Bobby Cater his name was and he grew up and when he was about 14 there was a rumour going round that a lot of these boys were going to be sent to Australia — to work on the land I suppose. Well I didn't like the idea of that — none of us did see, so we wrote a letter and said we disapproved of Bobby Cater being moved out of the country. He was sent to a farm in Devon. It's the kind of thing you do isn't it — when you are in the Co-operative Movement.

We collected for the dumb animals. We collected for the blind people — for a guide dog. There was only a small amount of us and I felt there was a lot of good to do in the world.



The platform party and (opposite) members at the 5th Birthday Tea of the Stratford New Town Guild, Stratford Co-op Hall 1931.

We were social in the Guild

We were not only interested in education, we were social, in the Guild. We didn't have Bingo in those days, but we had our little parties and get-togethers and birthdays. In the cottages round Cricklewood, nearly all the men had allotments and they used to bring some flowers or some potatoes or some parsnips or something. We'd sell them at the Guild and then we'd have a party with the money we got out of the fruit and vegetables you see.

Mother used to go along to Guilds and speak in the Social part and she'd sing this song, it was her party piece. This was a song about a parrot that came from one of the musical comedies at the end of the last century, beginning of this century. In the chorus there was the opportunity of giving the most God Almighty shriek which came as a startle. It used to reduce the audience to absolute rolling in the aisles because they weren't expecting it or anything. And the volume was considerable and what I've found very very pleasing naturally even now, my mother died in 1945, even, all these years later, I could be speaking in Newcastle, or Birmingham or in Exeter and after I've finished speaking a little old lady will come up to me and say "Ee — I remember your mother. She used to sing that song about a parrot."

One thing I would like to emphasise, because they had the Guild movement, and because people wanted more of a social life and because there was very little money about, the Enfield Highway Society and other Societies of course, they did make a big contribution to the social life of the area in that there was always monthly socials and dances, where the Guildswomen would do the refreshments and they would have a band. Now a social dance isn't the same as the ordinary dance these days, because there was always the cultural element came in. They would always have a singer, baritone or soprano or a piano forte solo, violin solo, according to the talents, they would encourage anybody talented to come up. These were run by the Society for Co-operators and Guildswomen combined. They would tell all the Guilds about it — get the Guildswomen all to come with their husbands on a Saturday night, together with all their friends who were Co-operators, you see. Occasionally, they would have a speaker come in the interval, you would have your local MP or your local Councillor, if there was a Labour Councillor, they would have them in and give a little talk, especially if it was near an election you see.

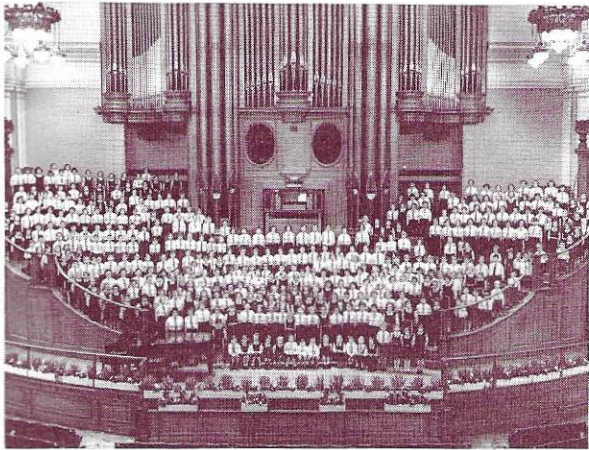
And in those days too, the Manager of the shop was our pal. He used to come in to our Birthday Parties and enjoy himself — we were all pals.



A lot of men were a bit dubious at first about the Guild. When we were in Blackheath before the war broke out, our men always used to come to our parties and it was a real sort of get-together. Everyone getting to know each other. The Guild movement made a lot of friends for women like myself who had no children. I was free to do what I wanted to do, as long as I didn't neglect my husband. He always used to come to the evening functions that we had there.

We used to go to the theatre now and again and we went to the Palladium. In those days Flanagan and Allan were on the Crazy Gang you know, and doing their bit on the stage one of them said something about "Mrs Buckland met her old man in the recreation ground" and then he said something else about Mrs Buckland — so coming home in the bus I said "Somebody's done it to me," I said "somebody's gone and told them about me," I said and we blamed somebody who had booked the seats for this — but it was Norah Philips what had done it. That was a Guild outing to the Palladium. It was Norah Philips wrote to Flanagan and Allan and said "Put Flo Buckland in". We had some wonderful times. She was a wonderful woman, she really was.

We always had a children's choir every Christmas in Central Hall. And there was the most marvellous conductor — Alan Bush. Every Christmas I used to go to that children's choir. It was marvellous!



I'll tell you an instance about the Lutona. Years ago they used to encourage the branches to have competitions — cake competitions, you know, using Lutona cocoa and as I say, the first meeting I went to to see what the Guild was all about — the next week they were going to have a Lutona competition and the Lutona factory provided a box of chocolates for the winner. And the recipe you had to follow, the recipe using CWS margarine and Lutona cocoa and all the rest of it you know — it was a sponge, a chocolate sponge. So, of course, I made one didn't I, and I won first prize — second week I was in the branch.



Silver Medal Lard



Shortex Cooking Fat



We had a big do at the Crystal Palace and we all joined there and we was all with our flowers. We all got flowers to represent us — well our flower in the S.E. section is a Marguerite and we all had to wear a Marguerite. And other places had a rose and all this sort of thing. It was a wonderful thing with the organ playing. That was another big affair we had in the Co-op Guild.

The C.W.S. HORTICULTURAL DEPT.
For all requirements in Seeds, Rose and Fruit Trees, Fertilisers and Bulbs

Catalogues issued: GARDEN SEEDS - DECEMBER
 FARM SEEDS - - - JANUARY
 BULBS - - - - - AUGUST
 NURSERY - - - - - AUGUST

Copies are sent free on request to the:
C.W.S. HORTICULTURAL DEPT., OSMASTON PARK ROAD,
 Phone 45886/7 Derby **DERBY** Grams—Wholesale

When I was at Muster Park — we had a wonderful young woman in the Guild — her name was Nora Lusher. Well she became engaged to Morgan Philips who was the Secretary of Fulham Labour Party and eventually they got married. And as a young woman she joined the Guild because her mother, Mrs Lusher, was in it. And she was a tremendous help to the Guild because she used to organise concerts — we'd have a wonderful concert perhaps for sixpence on a Saturday night, dancing, singing and everything. Well then we organised the concert party and we used to go round to other Guilds giving shows, singing, dancing and sketches. And Nora Philips eventually became Baroness Philips and she had a daughter whose name is now Gwyneth Dunwoody. Now you've heard of her, haven't you?

I remember Gwyneth and Morgan used to come to our socials and Gwyneth used to be a baby playing on the floor. That was when we used to have the sixpenny hops for the Guild. Everybody used to bring their children. If they brought their children all the better really. They used to have slippers on and run about if they wanted to. But we were very careful they didn't annoy the speakers.

We used to have speakers' competitions. And the first year our Guild went in it, we won first prize and in those days it was a silver cup. And Mrs Lusher, she was a speaker and because she was Morgan Philips mother-in-law, they all said it wasn't fair. But our name was on that cup — Munster Park. And it was the first name on this silver cup. It was a public speaking competition, see, just for the women of the Guild. And it went on for many years after that.

Co-op Days Outings and carnivals

One of the interests that kept people going was the outings. They used to have these charabanc outings. They used to be called charabancs and that's where the Guildswomen one or two who'd come from the East End of London and they really let their hair down on these coach parties. We always started very very lively. We'd start singing on the way. It was such an occasion — such a treat to go to the seaside you see. And then on the way home the ladies would start dancing down the aisles — singing and dancing after they'd had perhaps a half glass of beer or something at the stop. There was no sort of restraint or restriction. It was always such a jolly affair. I can remember them as clearly as anything. To us it was something special to have the day away from home you see. So we put everything we'd got into having a most marvellous day.

I remember outings to the L.C.S. Works — we used to go to — there was a cocoa factory at Luton, jam factory at Reading and we all had the shock of our lives when we went to this jam factory because it was not long after the war and sugar had been rationed but because the Guild had a coachload, they'd swept the floor and there was masses of sugar piled up on the side — you see to make the pathway nice and clear for us. And that was the sugar that had been so precious. And for a long while we used to talk about this sugar that had just been wasted — swept up on the floor.

I went to the packing and the jam factory belonging to the CWS and I took along some Russians — Russian Co-operators — to this factory in Lowestoft and we were going to show off the CWS and all our goods and so on and without a word of a lie, there was two old ladies sitting in the corner popping onions in the jar with their fingers. That was a CWS factory. And its still there! And I didn't know what to do. I was so embarrassed. And then you said "Of course they're on short time....."

We went down to one in West London that was a jam factory. When they knew we were coming a tea was laid out on the table, you see. Yes we've had some good times. We've had some good outings.

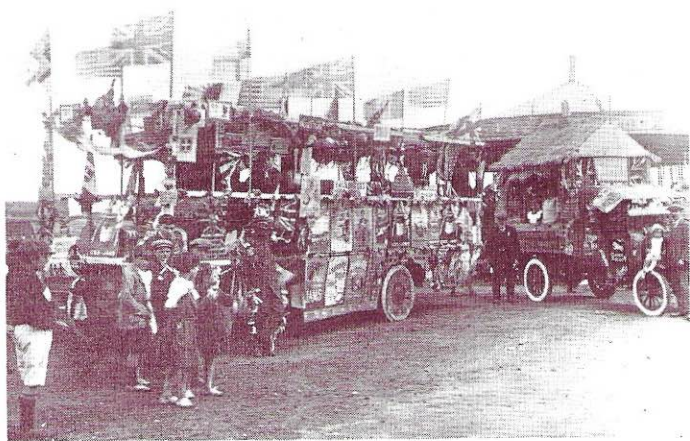
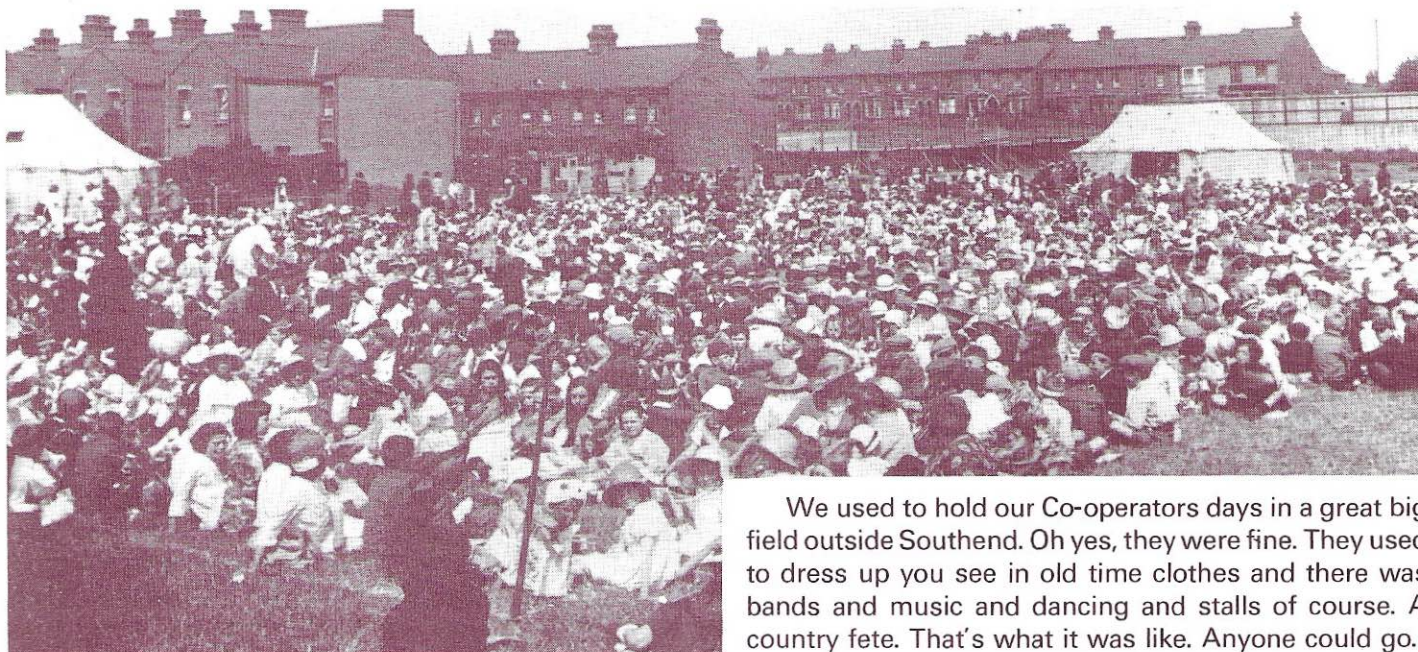
I went to the soap works at Silvertown, soapworks and sweets. We went by coach — you paid your coach fare and they gave us a guided tour. And I can remember now they had these great vats of sugar and they used to put essences in, you know to get different flavours and then we went from there across a bridge to the soap factory. Coming away we had a gift of soap and some sweets from the sweet factory. When we went to Luton, the cocoa factory, they gave us packets of cocoa and a box of chocolates. You see the Co-op had much more money then — people didn't have much to spend but the Co-op had more profit. It must have been profit mustn't it to have given it back again like that? But there is so much competition now they can't keep going, can they?



Enfield Highway Society had its own farm. And the tomato houses belonged to the Enfield Highway Society and so they had great stretches of land for the hot houses in which they grew, not only tomatoes but other things as well. And this strip of land that was by the riverside was attached to the greenhouses of the Society. But it was quite a long way from where we lived. When I say a long way it was about 13 or 14 miles and we used to walk there in those days. Even as young ones, we walked to it. That's what the Co-op stands for really — furthering your education and your well-being and the proximity between one Guild and another — they try to bring us all together at different times. And we also used to go to a very beautiful place — this was when we were on the Guild district — to High Lea and place called High Lea, the most beautiful place governed by Helen and Robert Barclay for the furtherance of education for women's organisations. And there used to be not only the Co-operative Guilds there but Salvationists, Baptists. It was a wonderful experience altogether and then we used to have the educational holiday in Dorking — that was really something. We used to end up with a Gala night. It was all so wonderful in those days.



On May Day, we would have a May Day procession through the Borough and the Co-op would provide coal carts and the children's circles used to be permitted to be those that would ride on the coal carts on May Day celebrations.



'Course there's always Co-op day which is the first Saturday in July. International Co-op Day. That's always the great Carnival day and when I was in this Edmonton Guild, we got the Co-op to lend us the local coal lorry. An open coal lorry. And we spent the night before, cleaning this coal lorry up and draping muslin all over it and we decided we'd go International so we put seats up on this coal lorry and every lady represented a different country. And I stood at the back as Britannia, being tall you see, I had to stand at the back and it was a very precarious position — with the helmet on and the sword. Just really to advertise Co-operation but again it was one of the things the people looked forward to, the Carnival. Carnivals were very important in those days. There were so very few things of a social nature, of a light-hearted nature around, because of poverty. Carnivals and such were very important.

We had quite a good Guild and we used to take part in the Co-operators Day. One of them was at Southend and we had a coal lorry and then we had a maypole put up and the different Guildswomen's children — my little girl was in it — and they were all dressed in different pastel colours and we were advertising the Co-op's soap and the Guildswomen made the dresses and one of our Guildswomen, an elderly woman — she was on the lorry too. The men came and helped to put it up and we did ever so well — I don't know if we got first prize or second prize down at Southend. That must have been in about 1934 or 35 — something like that.